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REBIRTH OF THE SOMALI STATE: POLICY OPTIONS AND PROGRAMME OPPORTUNITIES FOR CANADA

by

Partnership Africa-Canada and

Som-Can Institute for Research & Development

November 3-4, 2000 (Ottawa)

4006.1E

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Rebirth of the Somali State

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Parliament Hill / Carleton University

Ottawa, Canada

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Since 1988, Somalia has experienced a devastating civil war, which has driven millions of people abroad, and killed and maimed hundreds of thousands more. This has led to the socio-economic deterioration and fragmentation of the whole country. Ten years later, economic and social indicators show that Somalis are confronted with greater poverty, poorer health, more unemployment and higher illiteracy. In the political arena, twelve peace and reconciliation conferences have failed and many of the regions are still marked by instability and conflict. The road to stability, decentralization, federalism and democratic government has a long way to go.

Despite the situation, a glimpse of hope emerged when the President of the Republic of Djibouti, Mr. Ismail Omar Geulleh, committed his Government to initiate a Somali National Peace Conference led by Somali civil society. The Somali National Peace Conference officially opened on May 2, 2000 in a city called Arte, in the Republic of Djibouti.

It is important to note that this conference lasted for more than six consecutive months. It was a Somali-driven process. The participants were from the various sectors of civil society: clan leaders, community groups, women's associations and representatives from the Somali diaspora, with the exception of some regional leaders and a few warlords. After six months of consultations and discussion, the will, the commitment and the capacity of Somali civil society from across the country led to the rebirth of a new Somali State. A New Transitional Government was formed, with a parliament of 245 members. An interim president, Dr. Abdiqasin Salaad Hassan, and his Prime Minister, Dr Ali Khalif Galaydh, were nominated and democratically elected within this process.

This outcome was a solution from within Somalis, with the Djibouti Government's role being limited to sponsoring the process. It is not an exaggeration, however, to say that regardless of this political achievement, there are more challenges ahead. The New Transitional Government is passing

through a very critical phase on its path to peace, reconciliation and reconstruction. This line of thinking inspired Som-Can Institute for Research and Development and Partnership Africa Canada to organize the Ottawa Conference, which was held in November 3-4, 2000.

Aims of the Conference

The aims of the conference were to:

- to raise awareness among the Canadian Government, Canadian NGOs, the private sector and the Somali diaspora, and to seek their support for the efforts of the peace process and democratic development in Somalia;

- to distill concrete recommendations with respect to the peace process, and issues of good governance and democratic development;

- to share the recommendations with the new Somali authorities and the international community;

- to strengthen and empower Somali civil society.

Som-Can Institute for Research and Development and Partnership Africa Canada strongly believed that presenting the lessons learned from the Somalia peace process would allow the Canadian government and NGOs the possibility to identify options for supporting the ongoing peace process and reconstruction. Canada is known to its leadership role in peacebuilding and citizen diplomacy in the world.

Participants of the Conference

Over a hundred participants and seven prominent speakers attended in this conference. Participants included representatives from the Canadian Government, NGOs (including Somali- Canadian NGOs) and other institutions, individual friends of Somalia and Somali activists.

The guest speakers were:

- His Excellence Mr. Roble Olhaye, the Djibouti Ambassador to the United States and Canada and representative to the United Nations.

- Dr Babafemi Badejo, a representative of the United Nations' Political Office for Somalia in Nairobi.

- Mr. Ahmed Dahir Shell, a co_chair of the Somali Technical Committee for Somalia National Peace Conference, who came from Djibouti.

- Mr. Abdishakur Abdulle, a Researcher and Scientist who is based in the United Arab Emirates.

Other speakers were:

- Dr Osman Salaad, Geologist and Researcher, from Quebec City.

- Mr. Mohamed Elmi Managing Partner of HornAfrik Media Inc, Mogadishu Somalia.

- Mohamed Dalmar former official of the Central Bank in Somalia and currently a Settlement worker in Ottawa.

- Mrs. Zaynab Aden and Mr. Ahmed Haji Jama (Speakers of the Friday Morning Session, within Somali diapora communities)

Themes

This conference was divided into three sessions: Friday morning, Friday afternoon and Saturday.

The theme of the **Friday morning session** was "the Cry of the Somali Civil Society for Peace". It was an informal session, and the intention was to provide a platform for Somali participants to discuss among themselves about their varying views of the rebirth of the Somali Transitional Government. The expected outcome was for participants to seek possible solutions for strengthening the peace process in Somalia.

At the opening of the morning session, Ms. Idil Salah, a co-founder of Som-Can Institute for Research and Development (SCIRD) and the co-chair of the session, set the tone of the conference by highlighting the Somali diaspora's previous contributions and the urgent need of their continuing support to the peace process. In her remarks, Ms. Idil Salah reminded the participants that the reason that "we as a Somali Diaspora are all here is to identify Somalia's political challenges and take part for the reconciliation and the reconstruction of the country".

In conclusion, she stated that "this conference is neither a recognition nor a reward to any one, or region. "It is a forum for a healthy dialogue among Somalis that have different opinions regarding the current political achievements and the "Rebirth of Somali State". The expected outcome of this session was for the participants to provide recommendations that could help the advancement of the peace dialogue among the opposing groups and the New Transitional Government. Ms. Salah, then invited Mr.Yusuf Dhabaryare, a member of the Executive Board of SCIRD, and the co-chair of the session, to the platform. In his opening remarks, Mr. Ahmed reiterated how the role of the Somali Diaspora in the peace process is inevitable. He said, "the time has come for all of us to work together in the search for creative and innovative tools that would hopefully prevent another conflict and bring a sustainable peace in Somalia.

After that, Mr. Yusuf welcomed the keynote speaker of the morning session, Mr. Ahmed Dahir Shell who was the co-chair of Somali Technical Committee: The Somalia National Peace Conference in the Republic of Djibouti.

In his speech, Mr. Shell stated that it was the cry of Somali civil society for peace which speeded up the Somali National Peace Conference to achieve a tangible solution. Before the Arte Peace Process, as a member of Somali Intellectual Forum, he started working for peace at the grassroots. Everywhere we go, he said, we expressed the danger that regional or clan divisions could pose to the unity of the Somali nation. It took us twenty months to advocate peace and inform most Somalis inside the country. He reminded the participants "the policy that many suggested as a solution to

Somalia's political chaos is dividing the country into eleven small regions based on clans and not zones".

In his conclusion, he requested the participants to remember that "Somalia's strength lies as a united society, and that separation is the worst enemy among us".

Presentations by two panellists - Mrs. Zaynab Aden from the north-west (known as Somaliland) and Mr. Ahmed Haji Jama from the north-east (known as Puntland) followed Mr. Shell's speech. They presented the perspectives of the Recovery Zones in north-east and north-west Somalia known as Puntland and Somaliland. Both these regions rejected the Arte National Peace Process and its outcome, including the recognition of the Transitional National Government.

In his presentation, Mr. Jama stated that "the Djibouti peace process was undemocratic, unrepresentative and illegal", while, Mrs. Aden pointed out that, "this new administration will bring another civil war and chaos to the recovery zones". In conclusion, both presenters stated that their perspectives on Somalia peace making in general are not different from fellow Somalis. They just did not agree with the clan-based approach that Arte conference adopted.

It is important to note that the positions that the panellists represented (those of the Puntland and Somaliland administrations) generated a in-depth and heated debate among the participants. It was noted that both regions used the same clan-based approach when they were establishing their administrations.

The participants also raised very important questions regarding how to enhance the overall peace process in Somalia and maintain the stability of the recovery zones. Would the New Transitional Government be able:

- to promote their views and interest in all parts of Somalia without resorting to violence?

- to preserve sufficient support from the international community and the Somali diaspora to unify the country?

- to face the threat posed by warlords and regional leaders intent on dividing the country into small regions with the support of neighbouring countries?

- to decentralize power and share resources equally in all Somali regions?

At the end of the session, all participants agreed to continue to support the national reconciliation process through more dialogue, forgiveness and confidence building among all regions in Somalia.

With the **Friday afternoon session**, the conference opened officially. The focus was an update on the current political achievement, challenges ahead and possible commitments of the international community including Canada and the United Nations.

At the opening, Ms. Ebyan Salah, the Executive Director of the Som_Can Institute for Research and Development (SCIRD) welcomed all the participants and shared some inspiring remarks with them.

She briefly presented the background of SCIRD and its role in working for Somalia's peace and development. Ms. Salah also reminded the participants how the Somali community and NGOs in Canada in 1998 mandated SCIRD to co-ordinate the efforts of Somali Canadians to rebuild and nurture Somalia's civil society in peacebuilding.

In addition, Ms. Salah summarized the morning workshop entitled " The Cry of Somali Civil Society for Peace" to the afternoon participants. She pointed out that the importance of this conference is that we have the opportunity to learn at first hand about the experience of the Somali National Peace Process by meeting with those who were involved directly or indirectly.

Ms Salah introduced Mr. Ahmed Hashi "Hashara", a former Ambassador, a lawyer and the chair of the afternoon session. Mr. Hashi then welcomed Mr. Eugene Bellemara, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation, who spoke on behalf of the Minister of International Cooperation, Ms. Maria Minna. Mr Bellemara stated, "I know that Hon. Maria Minna has made Africa a real priority for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and she recognizes the importance of long-term peace to human security and sustainable development in countries in conflict, including Somalia."

"This is an important moment," he continued, "in the move towards democracy in Somalia and this conference will help us all further understand how peace and democracy can take hold. Canada has been encouraged by the progress achieved in establishing a Somali parliament and we particularly welcomed the participation of civil society actors and the place given to women in the Assembly during the Arta election process. Currently, Canada continues to work with the donor community and the United Nations to determine what future role the international community can and should play in Somalia. It is through the efforts of people and organizations that are gathered here today, that the people of Somalia will be able to avoid future conflicts and achieve a sustainable peace."

Mr. Bellemara concluded his remarks by saying, "I know that Minister Minna looks forward to hearing from you about your ideas on how Canada can work with the international community and the people of Somalia to help rebuild the country."

The second speaker, Ambassador Roble Olhaye, presented the Djibouti Peace Initiative for Somalia. In his outstanding speech he stated, "There couldn't be more glaring evidence of the combination of tragedy and leadership failure in our time than that of Somalia. **The rebirth of Somalia**, therefore, represents the best birthday present to all Somalis everywhere in this new millennium." The Ambassador shared with the participants the whole process of the Somalia peace initiatives and the role that the Djibouti government played. He concluded in his speech that the international community's commitments to the revival of Somalia's institutions and to the rebuilding of its infrastructure are crucial. He also pointed out that "all countries in the region need to demonstrate that they have a stake in peace in Somalia. It is in the best interest of every country in the region, therefore, to extend a helping hand to the new government, and support it in its endeavour to bring back sanity and stability in Somalia."

Dr Babafemi Badejo, Senior Political Advisor at the UN Political Office for Somalia then presented

the United Nation's role in the Somalia peace process and future commitments. Dr Badejo stated, "The United Nations family remains committed to the fostering of peace in Somalia."

The UN Secretary-General in his speech at the inauguration of President Abdiqassim made it clear that the conclusion of the Arta process was not the end of the peace process. His call on the TNG to work hard to bring on board those who did not participate in the Arta meeting was indicative. Dr Badejo informed us that respective operational Agencies are working on areas of support to the TNG in particular and the peace process in general.

Dr Badejo concluded his remarks by saying that "Peace is a process and not an event. The Guelleh initiative was a fundamental effort that narrowed the differences among Somalis and, more importantly, provided governance structures that could be worked with by the international community in pushing the frontiers of peace forward. President Ismail Omar Guelleh gave leadership in the achievement of a TNG that finally took Somalia out of its coma and returned it to the community of nations."

Mr. Ahmed Dahir Shell then discussed in depth about "**Somalia Peace from Within**". Mr. Shell urged Somalis to show determination and commitment and put their house in order before approaching the international community for assistance. He also requested Somalis to let bygones be bygones and together to try to strive towards the development and progress of the newly reborn state.

Bernard Taylor, Executive Director of Partnership Africa Canada (PAC) then made some concluding remarks. He stated, "Som_Can is to be congratulated for having taken the initiative to organize this Conference. Partnership Africa Canada is happy to have been able to collaborate with Som_Can in helping to organize it."

He added, "It's Election time in Canada and there is a lot of discussion about Canadian problems, but no one is talking about foreign policy or aid issues. We have to redress that somehow. The UNDP listing of World Development puts Canada again in the No 1 position. And Somalia? It's not even the list. If it were, it would be at the very bottom, below war torn Sierra Leone, with minimal levels of health, education and economic development, problems of landmines, fisheries being exploited by foreign fleets etc. This situation cannot continue. Somali people (especially women and children) deserve to enjoy the peace and development that can happen once the conflict ends."

He recalled that "During a visit to northern Somalia last year, it was clear that the conditions were occurring which would allow development to take place, if only the international community would react more positively. There was stability throughout the northern regions, with functioning administrations in place, despite the minimal resources. Economic activity was quite dynamic, but there were few aid programmes. It was our analysis that development assistance, through NGOs, the UN and regional administrations would help consolidate the peace process in advance of the rebirth of the Somali State. That holds true today."

He concluded his remarks by an appeal: "I urge Canadian organizations and Somali Canadians to

make every effort to find ways of helping the Somali people - all over Somalia - to address these short-term and long-term problems. We must help them break the quarantine that Somalia finds itself in."

The main purpose of the **Saturday session** was to discuss Somalia's current social and economic problems. The ways that could be improved include strengthening the private and public institutions and encouraging international investors to invest in Somalia. Four complementary papers with unique messages and recommendations were presented.

In this session, Ms. Idil Salah welcomed all the participants and the four panellists. The first panellist was Mr. Mohamed Dalmar, a former employee of the Central Bank of Somalia. Mr. Dalmar discussed the monetary experience of Somalia in the past three decades and the reasons that Somalia has had a very sad monetary experience marked by financial chaos, currency collapse, runaway inflation and economic ruin. Mr. Dalmar asked, "What lessons can we learn from the past experience?" In response, he provided the following recommendations:

- Donors should never give cash to the government. If they do so, they should know that they are contributing to political instability in the country.

- Aid should be transparent, directed to specific developmental projects and initiatives, and implemented with community participation and supervision.

- The process of money creation must be protected from political pressure so as to reduce the scope for corruption and abuse of power. For this reason, it is recommended that the Central Bank of Somalia be abolished and that a currency board system be introduced. A currency board is a monetary authority that issues notes and coins in exchange for a reserve currency, such as the US dollar.

Mr. Dalmar pointed out clearly that "the free market economy is now flourishing in every corner of Somalia, and the spirit of entrepreneurship, characteristic of the Somalis, is ever strong. There is no reason to fear that we will ever go back to a public sector dominated economy."

The next speaker was Mr. Abdishakur Abdulle, a Research Scientist who addressed "Prioritization and investment for Health and Education: a Path to Human Development for Somalia". His presentation was aimed to review the present situation of Somalia, particularly health and education, the building blocks of human development. Mr. Abdulle stated that " in the absence of a government structure, there are apparently no national prevention plans or other health services, such as diagnostics and treatment. Thus, communicable diseases are the leading causes of morbidity and mortality. At present, the main causes of illness and death remain malaria, diarrhea, tuberculosis, hepatitis, and acute respiratory infection. The risk of cholera, measles, and meningitis outbreaks is also quite high. Although some scientists reported zero prevalence rates of HIV/AIDS, others indicated that there was a very low prevalence of 1-2% before the civil war. However, nothing is known about the HIV/AIDS situation in Somalia. A particular threat is from the drastic increase in migration, a major rout for the spread of HIV/AIDS, between Somalia and its neighbouring countries namely Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya."

Mr. Abdulle also addressed the plight of education in Somalia "which is nothing but one of grief and sorrow. At this time and age of a new millennium, Somalis live in pre-history era of illiteracy. Almost all teaching facilities including universities were plundered, destroyed, and mostly apprehended by rebels in crises zones; and refugees in recovery zones."

"The basic education rights are denied for the vast majority of Somali children. There are no public schools, and the few operational private schools are very costly and accessible for the wartime rich minorities. Children of other less fortunate families seek employment to support the family household instead. Others, such as orphans, join militias and street gangs under the tribal umbrella as their last window of opportunity and shelter."

In his conclusion, he demonstrated how the Somali people and their leadership are required to have a strong will and determination to overcome these extreme difficulties: "The question is though, how many more dying children, crying mothers or helpless aging heroes do we need to see before we act? We must understand that war is one thing, peace is quite another. In war time competition is the dominant attitude, but the search for peace can be achieved through collaboration, concession and compromise. What is required is not fund raising, it is rather a far-sighted and capable leadership, which can illuminate the path to peaceful coexistence and can take drastic and hard decisions towards peace. Prioritizing and investing in health and education will become real means that would save Somalia in the short and long run."

Dr Osman Salad Hersi, researcher and geologist presented a paper entitled " Exploring Somalia's natural resources: A Geological Perspective." Dr Osman divided the natural resources of Somalia into three categories: i) Marine resources including fish and salt, ii) surface resources (e.g., forests, wild life, frankincense and myrrh, surface water, etc), and iii) subsurface resources (e.g.,rocks and minerals, fossil fuels, and groundwater). Only subsurface natural resources of Somalia were considered in his short contribution. Rocks and minerals that are known to exist and available for development in the Somali Republic include tin in the Majiyahan - Dhalan area (south of Bosaso - Ceelayo), sepiolites in the Ceel Bur district, iron-ore in the Precambrian terrain of the Bur region, quartzite, granite, marble, sandstone, limestone and gypsum in different regions of the country. Occurrences of uranium-, titanium-, chromium-, zircon-, nickle-, and rubidium-bearing minerals are also known in different places of the country.

These natural resources include primary raw materials for various kinds of industries, e.g, cement, ceramic and glass industries, wallboards, roofing and wall tiles, paving stones, aggregate and concrete production, and industrial minerals. Minerals with high exploration potential include gold, zinc, lead, manganese, copper and others. Existence of good petroleum indicators has been known for a while, and recent data is highly encouraging concerning the hydrocarbon exploration potential of the country. Water resources are the most needed commodities in Somalia, and many areas with promising groundwater accumulation have been identified as well.

Since we have so many surface, subsurface, and marine resources, Dr. Osman asked why are the Somalis starving? The answer could be summarized as follows:

- lack of technology, security, and political stability;

- scarcity of professionals and skilled people, and the struggle for survival for those few available professionals; and

- mismanagement and/or lack of sincere, capable, and responsible administration.

Dr Osman Salad concluded his presentation with a few recommendations addressed to the Somali people, the future Somali Government and the donor community. Dr. Osman proudly stated that the Somali community should trust that we have ample natural resources. Therefore he said: "we need to improve our skills, perfect our professions, and raise awareness that we need good governance. Without it, no country can develop its resources." He also urged all Somalis in the diaspora to collect as much data and documents in their respective fields as possible, and allocate them for a national use and reference.

He added: "In the hope of establishing a federal government in Somalia, this government:

- should trust the constituent states / regions to develop the natural resources of their respective territories;

- should also develop good foreign policy, which attracts investment, and facilitate repatriation of Somali professionals;

The international community should:

- help Somalia morally and materially to recover from the civil war and to establish good governance;

- contribute to the development of the most needed natural resources, water, and continue to support the stable regions to develop their natural resources."

Mr. Mohamed Elmi presented a paper on "Somalia's Private Sector: the Role of the Media and Communication". At the beginning, Mr. Elmi briefly explained how Somalia's telecommunications and media sector were totally controlled by the previous government, and how "the telephone system was less technologically advanced than what it is today. The accessibility to the public was limited and it wasn't that affordable either". One positive outcome of the civil war is the privatization of the media. Mr. Elmi argued that the privately owned media has been very active lately in Somalia, and freedom of speech and press have never been better. In comparison, during the dictator's era, there were no more than two to three government controlled papers in the whole country. In contrast, at the present there are more than a dozen private daily newspapers in Mogadishu alone, and many more in the rest of the country. Some are weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly and so on. Their quality, circulation, taste and target groups are different.

In addition, there are several privately owned FM and SW radio stations in the country and also at least 3 private TV stations; one in Hargeysa and two in Mogadishu.

Mr. Elmi also discussed the role of the media in peacebuilding. As he put it, "the media helps the exchange of ideas where it becomes conducive to the peace process". Mr. Elmi concluded his

presentation by saying "with our people's entrepreneurship skills, and the help of the international community, a more modern Somalia can be resurrected within a foreseeable future.

Regarding the question of peace, Mr. Elmi reminded the participants that "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. If Somalis want to aspire to any enviable status, they have to trust themselves, and give peace a chance."

Recommendations

The following are some of the recommendations that came out from the conference.

The international community, including Canada must:

- react quickly to the external aggressions that are destabilizing Somalia's peace;

- ensure a more effective implementation of the embargo on arms to Somalia;

- support and guide Somalia's governance structure in place to push forward the peace process and development;

- encourage and strengthen recovery zones to maintain their peace, and continue to support their development;

- develop special funding for Somalia's peacebuilding and reconstruction;

- promote peace, good governance and human development as a central focus of international aid;

- strengthen the capacity of local NGOs by developing partnership linkages with Canadian and international NGOs.

The New Transitional Government must:

- continue peace dialogue among Somalis without creating any further conflicts;

- encourage the private sector and civil society to continue their support for Somalia's peace and development;

- develop good foreign policy, which attracts investment, and facilitate repatriation of Somali professionals;

- appeal to the Somali diaspora for further contribution to peace and investment for the development of the country.

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The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of SCIRD and PAC, or its donors, and are the responsibility of the authors.

There is a full report about the conference available upon request. If you are interested in receiving a copy, please contact us directly at

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